



## Follow-Up Review Team Report

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Team Visit: April 19 - 20, 2022

### *Section A: Institutional Representatives*

Provide a list of the following institutional representatives at the time of the visit:

Dr. Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, Interim President

Dr. Daniel Engstrom, Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

Ms. Fawn Petrosky, Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance

Mr. James T. Davis, Chair, Council of Trustees

The team visit was coordinated by  
Dr. Leonard A. Colelli, Accreditation Liaison Officer

### *Section B: Institutional Context and Nature of the Visit*

*Provide a brief introduction to the institution, including a summary of the nature and conduct of the visit. Include the Commission action that directed this visit.*

California University of Pennsylvania (Cal U) is a regional, comprehensive university located in southwestern Pennsylvania, about 35 miles from Pittsburgh on the banks of the Monongahela River. After creation of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (State System/PASSHE) in 1983, the school became one of the Commonwealth's 14 state-owned, public universities, assuming its current title of California University of Pennsylvania. As part of the Pennsylvania higher education integration process, effective July 1, 2022, Clarion University of Pennsylvania and Edinboro University of Pennsylvania will be integrated with and into California University of Pennsylvania and the name of California University of Pennsylvania will change to Pennsylvania Western University.

California University of Pennsylvania submitted its Self-Study in February 2020 and hosted a virtual evaluation team visit from Tuesday, September 22, through Friday, September 25, 2020. At its March 4, 2021 meeting, the Middle States Commission acted as follows:

To acknowledge receipt of the self-study report. To note that the institution hosted a virtual site visit in lieu of an on-site visit in accordance with United States Department of Education (USDE) guidelines published March 17, 2020. To postpone a decision and request a supplemental information report, due September 1, 2021, documenting evidence of the sufficiency of planning and resources to fulfill its mission and goals and to support its educational purposes and programs (Standard VI). To request that the supplemental information report also provide further evidence of a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision-making by each constituency (Standard VII). To direct a follow-up team visit following submission of the supplemental information report. To note the visit will also fulfill the verification requirements of the USDE guidelines. Upon reaffirmation of accreditation, the next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2027-2028.

The Follow-up Team Visit took place virtually April 19 – 20, 2022. During the visit the team met with the following individuals and groups:

- President
- Cabinet
- Vice President for Finance and staff
- Supplemental Report Working Group Members
- Budget and Planning Committee
- Representatives from the Council of Trustees
- Mini Shared Governance Task Force
- Open Meeting with Faculty and Staff.

### *Section C: Requirements of Affiliation*

**For each requirement of affiliation under review, provide the following.**

No requirements of affiliation were reviewed during this follow-up review.

### *Section D: Standards for Accreditation*

**For each standard under review, provide the following information:**

**STANDARD VI: PLANNING, RESOURCES AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

*The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.*

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the follow-up report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the team visit.

### Summary of Findings

*Provide a brief summary or bulleted points that reflect, collectively, on the institution's compliance with the standard and its corresponding criteria. The summary should reference the evidence verified during the review process.*

Since the Self-Study, Cal U has focused on several strategies to ensure the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources, with particular attention to enhancing enrollment, revenue growth and expenditure savings. At the same time, it has been collaborating in the integration of Clarion and Edinboro universities with Cal U as the institutions transition fully to Pennsylvania Western University.

As part of the PASSHE system, funds for operating budgets are received from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Funding also comes from tuition, fees, residential leases, meal plans, parking fees and auxiliary enterprises. Ongoing direct communication with and support from PASSHE are critical to the success of Cal U.

The Educational and Non-Educational Alliance partnerships initiative has expanded connections with seven institutions, and twelve more are under development. The new relationships, along with strengthened community college agreements, are expected to improve enrollment. Tracking, measuring and assessing the results of this initiative will be important to evaluating its impact.

Net Assets for FY22 are expected to be positive due to the impact of federal COVID Relief Funds and cost-saving measures. The FY23 Enrollment and Financial projections will be consolidated in the new integrated university.

As part of the PennWest integration, Cal U financial reporting will be consolidated with the two other institutions comprising the new university. Enterprise applications to join the three institutions are expected to result in an effective support system to fulfill its mission, goals and objectives. Success will depend on sufficient resources for these critical IT integrations, as well as assessment of their effectiveness.

To enhance savings, Cal U has undergone a right-sizing process, reducing faculty FTE from 330 in Fall 2018 to a projected Fall 2021 FTE of approximately 270. Measures to assess the adequacy of faculty and staff levels, and particularly any impact on retention, learning outcomes and student satisfaction, will be necessary to gauge the effectiveness of these efficiency decisions. Cal U has plans to increase online delivery by 50%. A thorough assessment process will be necessary to ensure adequate support.

External audits covering fiscal years 2020 and 2021 reveal opportunities to develop internal controls necessary to maintain the integrity of financial and budget operations.

- **Team Recommendation(s)** (*Institutional action(s) needed for the institution to continue to meet this standard. Select from list of standardized recommendations. If no recommendations are made by the team, write "None".*)

The team recommends that the institution continue to assess and document evidence of adequate fiscal and human resources, including physical and technical infrastructure, to support operations.

- **Requirement(s)** (*If institution does not appear to meet this standard, the team must identify institutional actions needed to achieve compliance with the standard; Select from list of standardized requirements. If no requirements are made by the team, write “None”.*)  
**None.**

**Recognition of Progress** (*Recognize noteworthy progress as it relates to the standard under review.*)

**STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION**

*The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy*

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the follow-up report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the team visit.

**Summary of Findings**

*Provide a brief summary or bulleted points that reflect, collectively, on the institution’s compliance with the standard and its corresponding criteria. The summary should reference the evidence verified during the review process.*

In its March 4, 2021 action, the Middle States Commission requested “further evidence of clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision-making by each constituency” (Criterion 1).

To respond to this action, since Spring 2021 Cal U has pursued three primary strategies: developing a Shared Governance Decision-Making Matrix, clarifying the Cal U governance structure and creating a new University Assembly. Moreover, the “Faculty Senate” has been returned to the official governance process. These actions were facilitated by the Mini Shared Governance Taskforce, which utilized a focused “Communication and Review Process” of proposed changes with all governance entities.

The Shared Governance Decision-Making Matrix articulates clear roles, responsibilities and accountability of each decision-making constituency. While in its nascent stage, the framework is intended to form the basis for future decision-making frameworks.

In response to concerns over a siloed governance structure, Cal U has created a strategic level deliberative governance committee called the University Assembly to improve communication and trust among all and to better inform administrative decision-making. The University has developed the Assembly Bylaws, which define membership from each governance area (faculty, staff, students and administration) and also include rotating leadership positions each year from faculty, staff and administration membership. While the first University Assembly meeting took place only recently, the structure is intended to be a model for future shared governance, which is an important priority for President Pehrsson and the entire community.

- **Team Recommendation(s)** (*Institutional action(s) needed for the institution to continue to meet this standard. Select from list of standardized recommendations. If no recommendations are made by the team, write “None”.*)

The University should continue to develop a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities and accountability for decision-making by each constituency, as well as periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership and administration.

- **Requirement(s)** (*If institution does not appear to meet this standard, the team must identify institutional actions needed to achieve compliance with the standard; Select from list of standardized requirements. If no requirements are made by the team, write “None”.*)  
**None.**

**Recognition of Progress** (*Recognize noteworthy progress as it relates to the standard under review.*)

### *Section E: Applicable Federal Regulatory Requirements*

**For each federal regulatory requirement under review, provide the following information:**

No federal regulatory requirements were reviewed during this follow-up review.

### *Section F: Review of Third-Party Comments*

Not applicable.

### **Section G: List of Additional Evidence**

**Section G does not need to be read during the Oral Exit Report.**

List all additional information requested by peer evaluators before or during the visit that was used to verify compliance with Commission standards, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and applicable federal regulatory requirements.

University Table of Organization  
 Finance/Business Office Table of Organization/Job Descriptions  
 FY21 Audited Financial Statements and Management Letter  
 FY23 Budget  
 Fall 21 and Spring 2022 Enrollment and Housing Results (with three-year history)  
 Cash Flow Report  
 Current Strategic Plan  
 Recent Facilities and Technology Plans  
 Table of Organization and Job Descriptions for the Finance-Business Office  
 Revised Governance Structure  
 Minutes, Cabinet Meeting (Governance Decision) 11-30-21  
 FY21 Audited Financial Statements California University 063021  
 Cal U Master Plan 2019  
 Bylaws of the University Assembly  
 Annual Inspection of Facilities Reports: June 2021, June 2020, June 2019  
 2019 - 2022 Right-Sizing Data  
 2021-22 Cash Flow Chart  
 2022 Supplemental Financial Sustainability Update  
 2021-22 Housing Budget and 3-Year History  
 Strategic Plan Transition to PennWest University  
 Cal U FY19 - FY22 Enrollment Results  
 FY 21-22 Projected Year-End Financial Results  
 Student Housing Budget Projections  
 University Organization Chart - PennWest Integration Version  
 University Assembly Minutes -rrw 4.13.22  
 University Technology Services Snapshot 2022

### **Section H: Follow-Up Report and Process Comments**

**Section H to be read during the Oral Exit Report if completed.**

*Use this section to provide any additional comments about the overall follow-up review and visit, where appropriate. Completion of this section presents an opportunity for the team to recognize the institution for progress to date or the quality of the written report, if applicable. Key requirements or recommendations may be summarized or reiterated here for emphasis. Do NOT include or allude to the action the team is proposing to the Commission.*

The team wishes to thank Dr. Pehrsson and the campus community for the hospitality shown and for the responsiveness to questions. We also recognize Dr. Len Colelli, the accreditation liaison officer, and his colleagues for the comprehensive materials provided before the follow-up visit. The team recognizes the community of California University for its substantial efforts in response to the Middle States actions. The leadership of President Pehrsson, the Cabinet and the various governance units demonstrates a significant commitment to ensuring the adequacy of financial resources to achieve the mission and goals of the institution and to ensuring a clear and transparent shared governance process. These commitments will serve the institution well as it transitions to PennWest University. Moreover, the community of Cal U should be commended for its efforts to address improvements to the sufficiency of planning and resources to fulfill its mission and goals and to strengthen its shared governance practices while simultaneously addressing the protracted impact of the pandemic and the integration plans for University.